

Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions With Chairman Eduard Shevardnadze of the Republic of Georgia

March 7, 1994

Whitewater Investigation

Q. Mr. President, can you tell us whether you or the First Lady were ever briefed after those meetings that have now been brought under question by the special counsel?

The President. I'm going to have a question-and-answer session after Chairman Shevardnadze and I have our meeting, and I'll be glad to answer some questions then.

Q. Would you answer that question later for us?

The President. I'll be glad to answer questions, yes.

Republic of Georgia

Q. What can you tell us about your meeting today with Mr. Shevardnadze? Are you able to offer more help? Are you concerned about recent developments in Russia and what threat they may provide to his country?

The President. Well, the United States has strongly supported Chairman Shevardnadze and the territorial integrity of Georgia. We've done our best to be good allies, and last year we tried to help with aid and we will do so again this year.

We want to talk a little about what can be done to help with peacekeeping efforts there and about other matters that affect their destiny in Georgia, including, obviously, events in Russia and other countries in the region. So I've really looked forward to this meeting for a long time. And I have many questions; I'm going to be listening hard today.

Q. [Inaudible]—U.N. troops there? U.N. troops to Georgia?

The President. Well, we want to talk about that today. We're going to have a visit about that.

NOTE: The exchange began at 12:05 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange.

The President's News Conference With Chairman Eduard Shevardnadze of the Republic of Georgia

March 7, 1994

The President. It's a real pleasure and an honor for me to welcome Chairman Eduard Shevardnadze to the White House today. Few leaders in our time have earned the degree of international respect that Chairman Shevardnadze enjoys. He's a statesman whose vision and diplomacy have played an immeasurably important role in bringing a peaceful end to the cold war.

This was our first personal meeting, although we've talked by phone on other occasions. It was a productive one. We discussed the great political and economic challenges facing Georgia. We discussed the steps the United States can take to help Georgia to meet those challenges.

I reaffirmed in very strong terms America's support for the independence, the sovereignty, and the territorial integrity of Georgia. And I expressed support for the efforts sponsored by the United Nations to find a lasting political settlement to the conflict in the Abkhaz region of Georgia. I'm hopeful that the parties to that conflict can achieve in their negotiations and maintain an effective cease-fire. If they can, the United States would be inclined to support a U.N. peacekeeping operation in Georgia, an operation that would not involve U.S. military units. We've already begun consultations on this issue with the Congress, whose views and support will be important. And Chairman Shevardnadze will have the opportunity to discuss this and other matters with Members of Congress during his stay here with us.

In our meeting today, we also discussed Georgia's efforts to expand cooperation with other nations in the Caucasus region. We agreed that both our nations have a tremendous stake in the success of reform in Russia, that a democratic and market-oriented Russia at peace with its neighbors is in the interests of Georgia and the United States.

I made it clear in our talks that the U.S. is committed to encouraging greater political freedom and economic renewal in Georgia. That commitment is outlined by the joint